

# Managing Customer Service



**SERVICE WITH A SMILE:  
ENHANCING CUSTOMER  
SERVICE TO PARENTS  
AND CHILDREN**

## Did You Know?

- 1 in 4 children in the United States participates in the child support program, and the program serves  $\frac{1}{2}$  of all poor children
- The child support program lifts **1 million** people out of poverty each year and provides about 30% of income for the poor families who receive it.

# Child Support Customers are Different

## SOME OF YOUR CUSTOMERS:

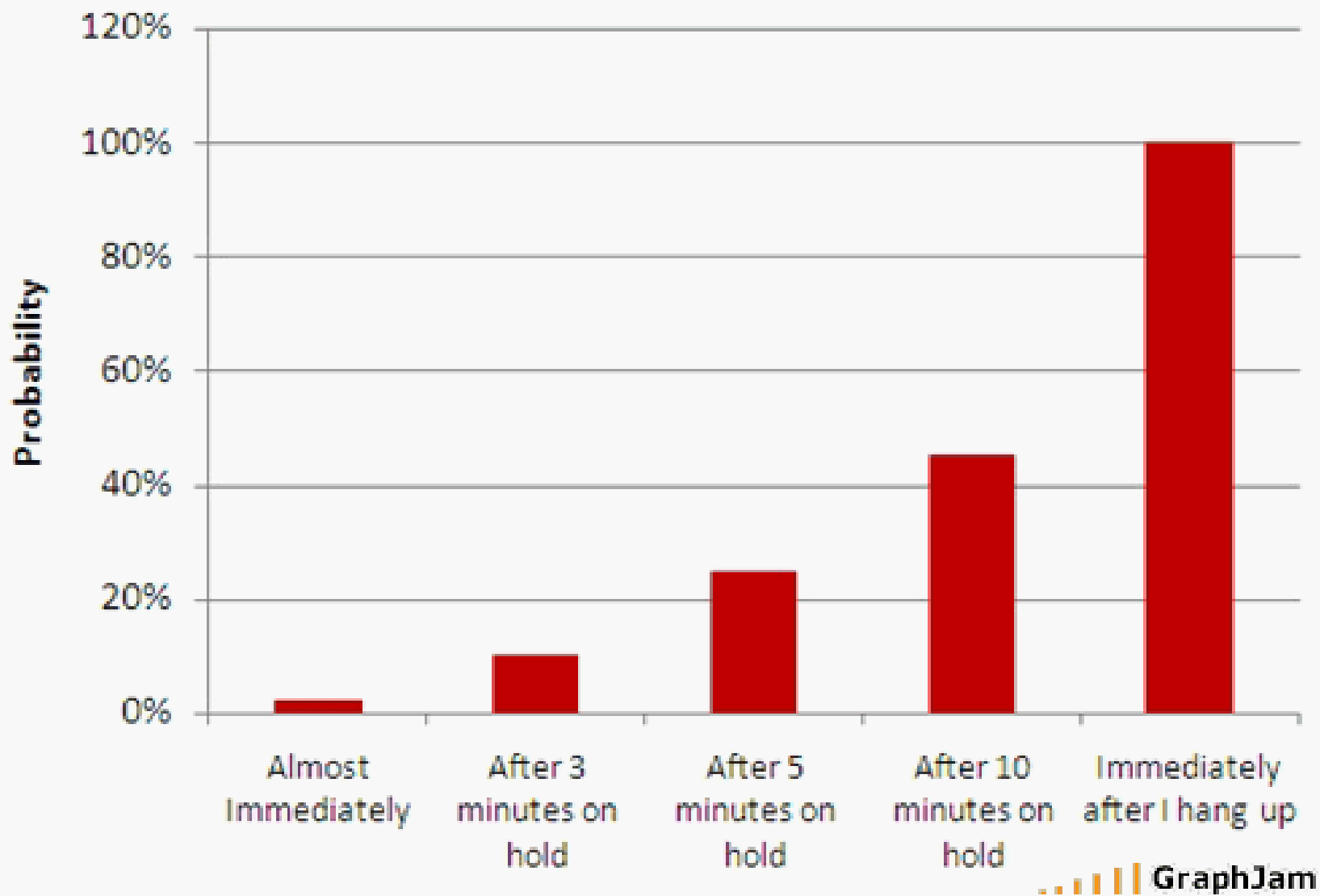
- Do not want to be your customers
  - Do not know what they want
  - Do not know what services are available
  - Are working through the breakup of their family
  - Are struggling financially to support their children
- There is nowhere else for them to go
- They must keep coming back until they are satisfied

# Contents :

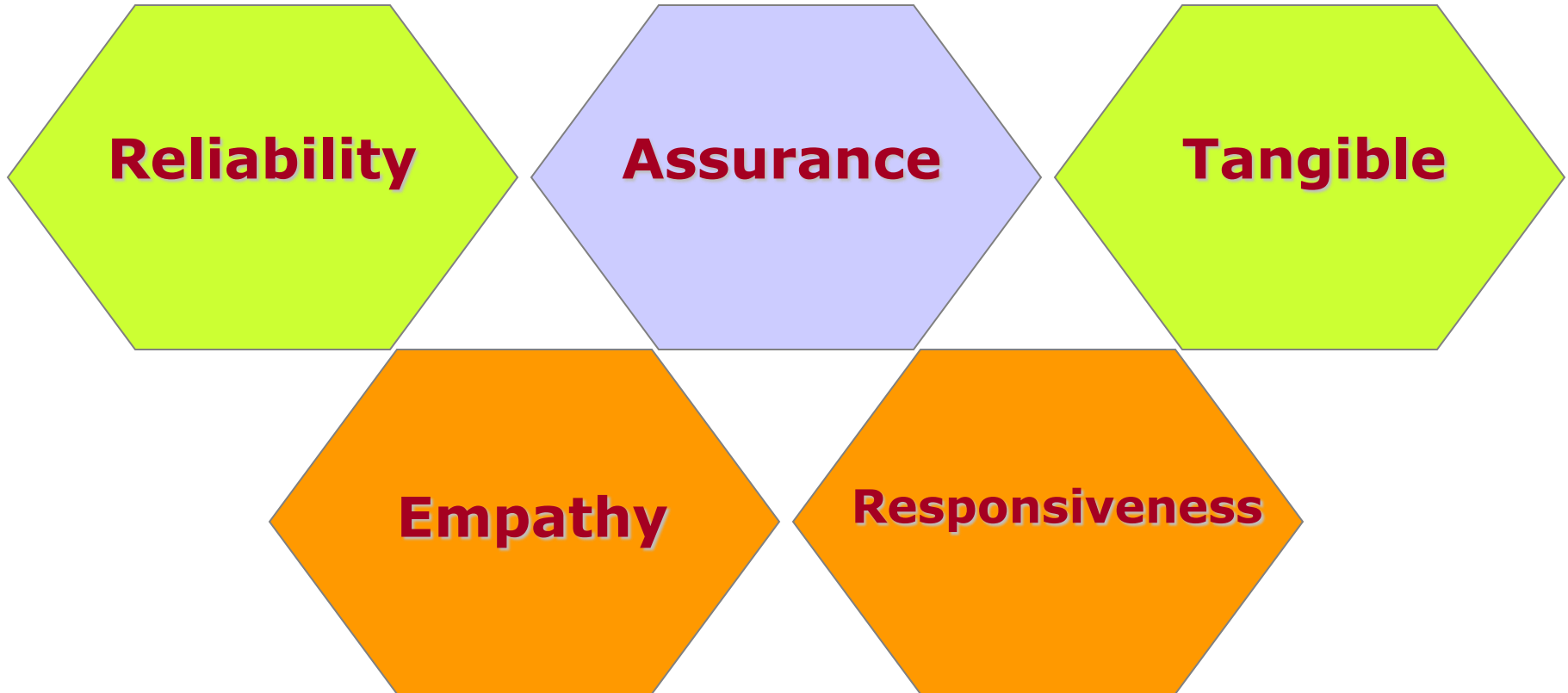
- Key Elements of Quality Customer Service
- Key Skills for Quality Customer Service
- Resolving Service Breakdowns

# **Key Elements of Quality Service**

## Probability the Customer Service Representative will Answer



# Five Elements of Quality Service



# Five Elements of Quality Service

## Reliability

- The ability to provide what was promised, dependably and accurately
- **Action strategy:**
  - Correctly identify customer needs
  - Promise only what you can deliver
  - Follow through to ensure that service was received as promised

# Five Elements of Quality Service

## Assurance

- The knowledge and courtesy of employees, and their ability to convey trust and confidence
- **Action strategy:**
  - Take the time to serve customers one at a time
  - Provide service assertively by using positive communication techniques
  - Describe services/results accurately

# Five Elements of Quality Service

## Tangible

- The physical facilities and equipment and the appearance of personnel
- **Action strategy:**
  - Maintain workspaces in a neat, orderly manner
  - Dress professionally
  - Maintain excellent grooming and hygiene standards

# Five Elements of Quality Service

## Empathy

- The degree of caring and individual attention provided to customers
- **Action strategy:**
  - Listen for emotions in your customers' messages
  - Put yourself in their place and respond compassionately by offering service to address their needs and concerns

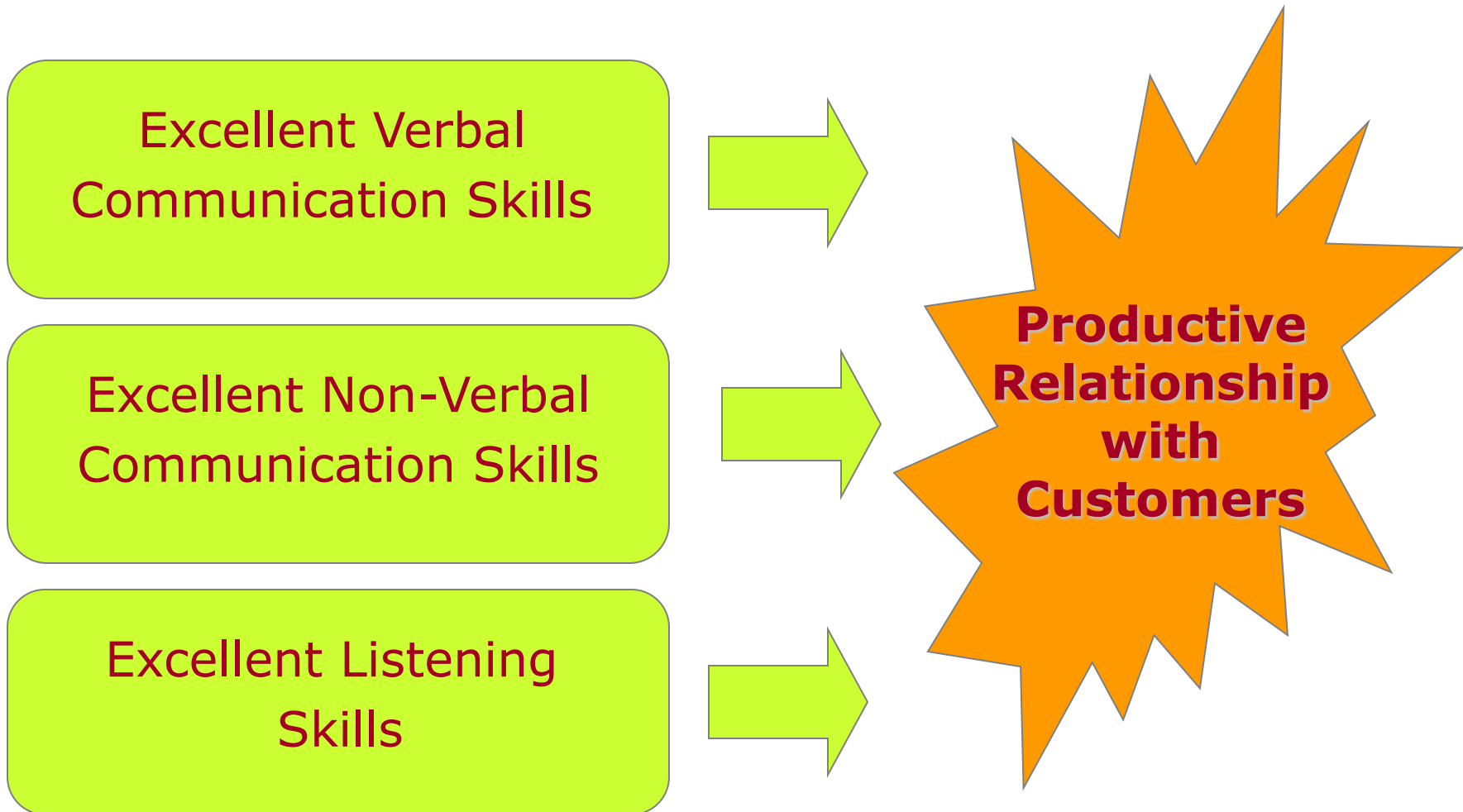
# Five Elements of Quality Service

## Responsiveness

- The willingness to help customers and provide prompt services
- **Action strategy:**
  - Project a positive, can-do attitude
  - Take immediate steps to help customers and satisfy their needs

# **Key Skills for Quality Customer Service**

# Developing Excellent Communication with Customers



# Excellent Verbal Communication with Customers



**Communicating  
positively.....**

- Plan your messages
- Greet customer warmly and sincerely
- Be specific
- Use “small talk”
- Use simple language
- Paraphrase

# Excellent Verbal Communication with Customers



**Communicating  
positively.....**

- Ask positively phrased question (*Instead of "Why do you feel that way," use: "What makes you feel that way?"*  
*Instead of "Why do you want that color?", use : "What other colors have you considered?"*)
- Communicate to your customer's style
- Agree with customers
- Solicit customer feedback and participation

# Excellent Verbal Communication with Customers



**Communicating  
positively.....**

**Words and phrases that build  
relationship:**

Please

Thank you

I can or will

How may I help?

I understand how you feel

You're right

May I

Would you mind.....

I apologize for....

# Excellent Verbal Communication with Customers



**Avoiding  
negative  
communication**

## **Words and phrases that damage relationship:**

You don't understand

You don't see my point

Hold on a second

Our policy says (or prohibits)

That's not my responsibility

What you need to do is.....

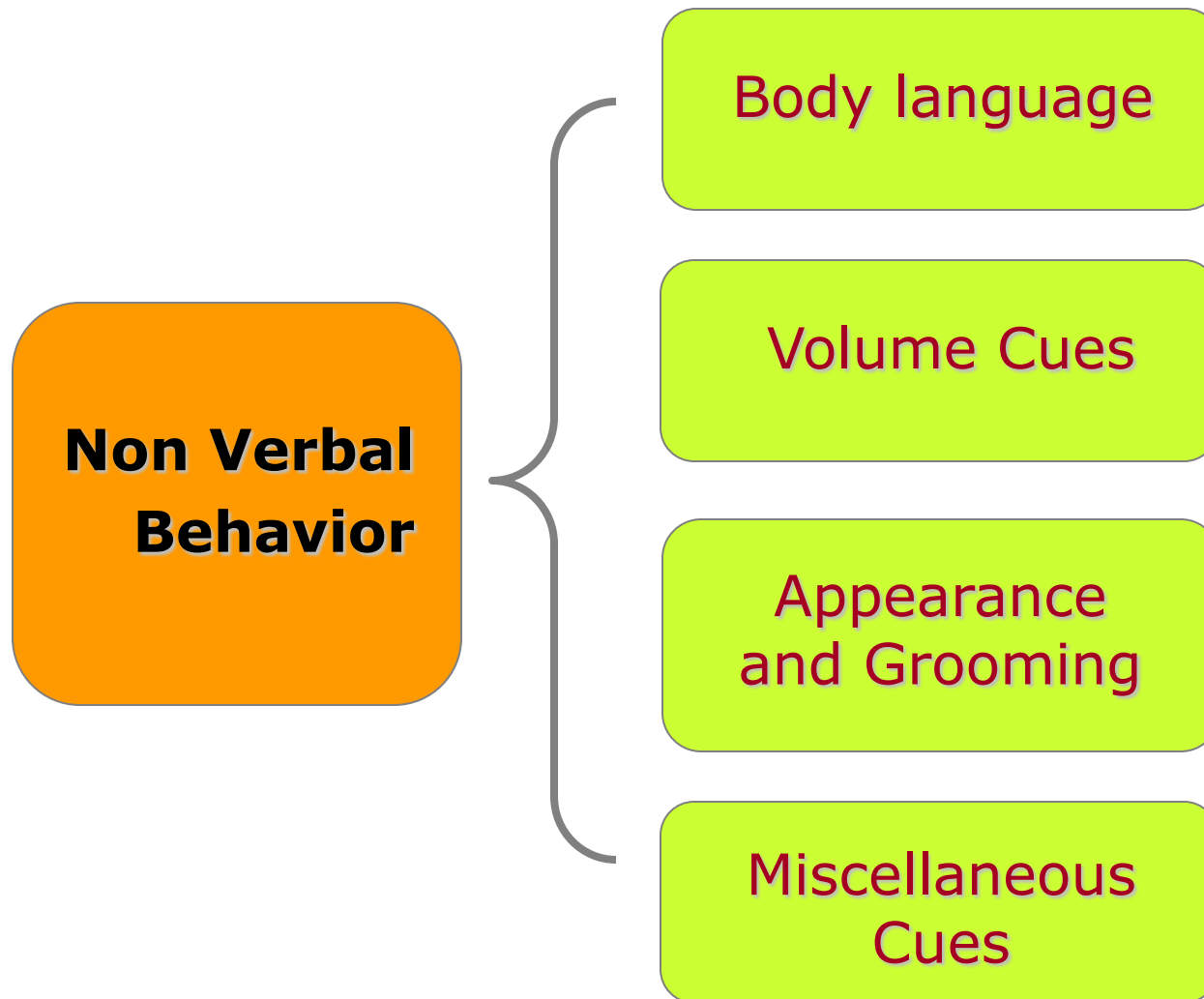
Why don't you

The word "problem"

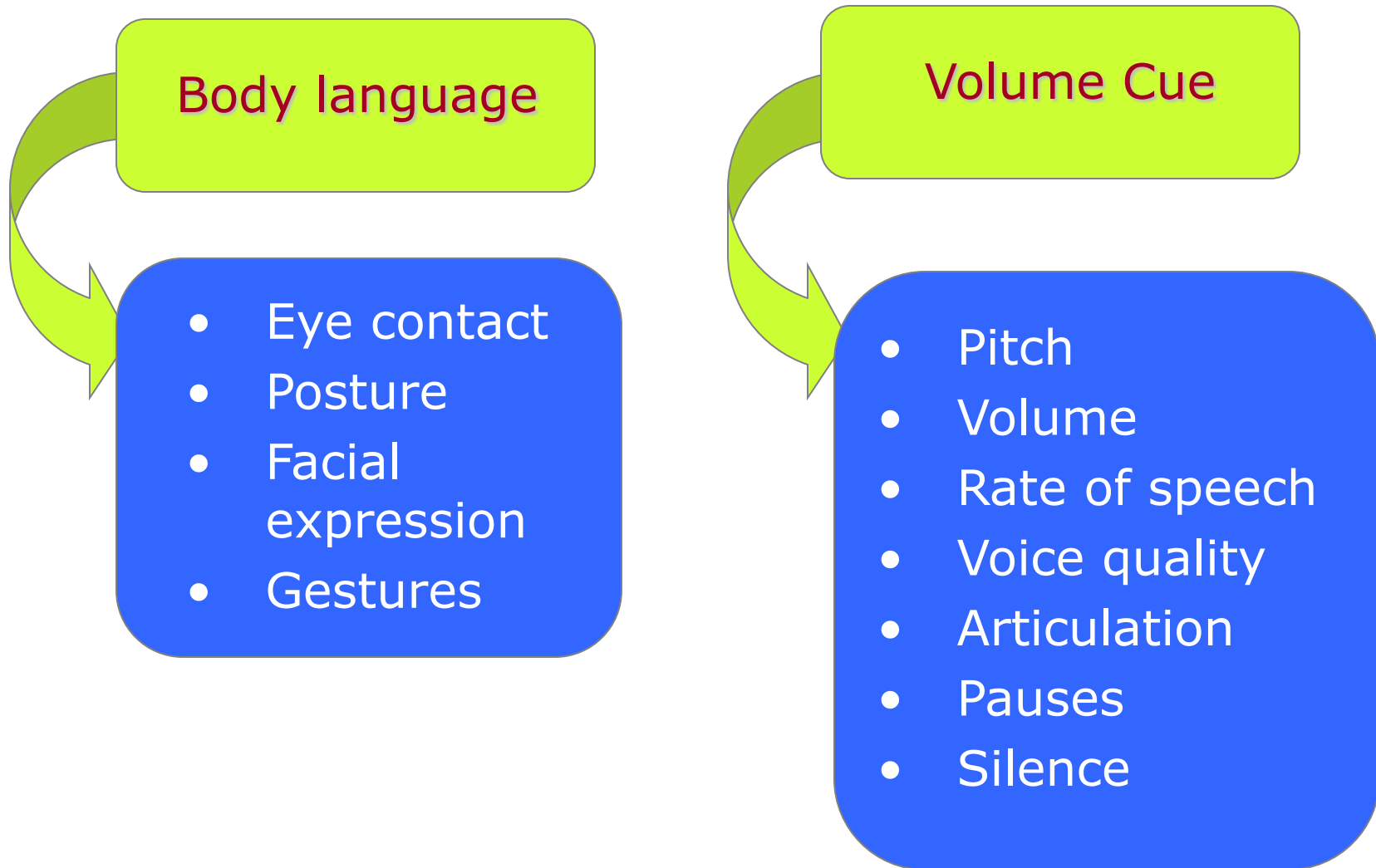
The word "but"

The word "no"

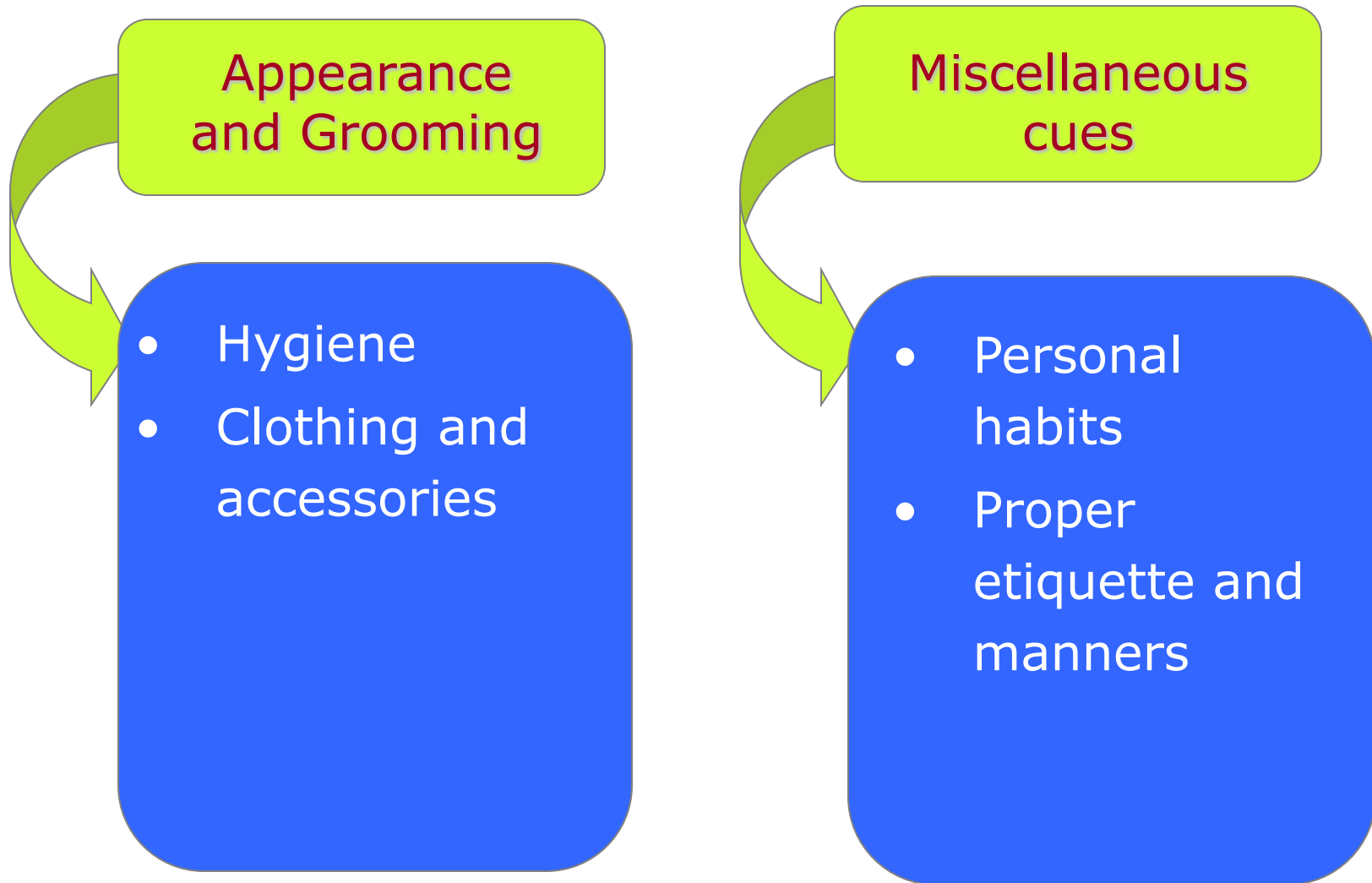
# Non Verbal Communication with Customers



# Non Verbal Communication with Customers



# Non Verbal Communication with Customers



# Positive and Negative Communication Behavior

## Positive

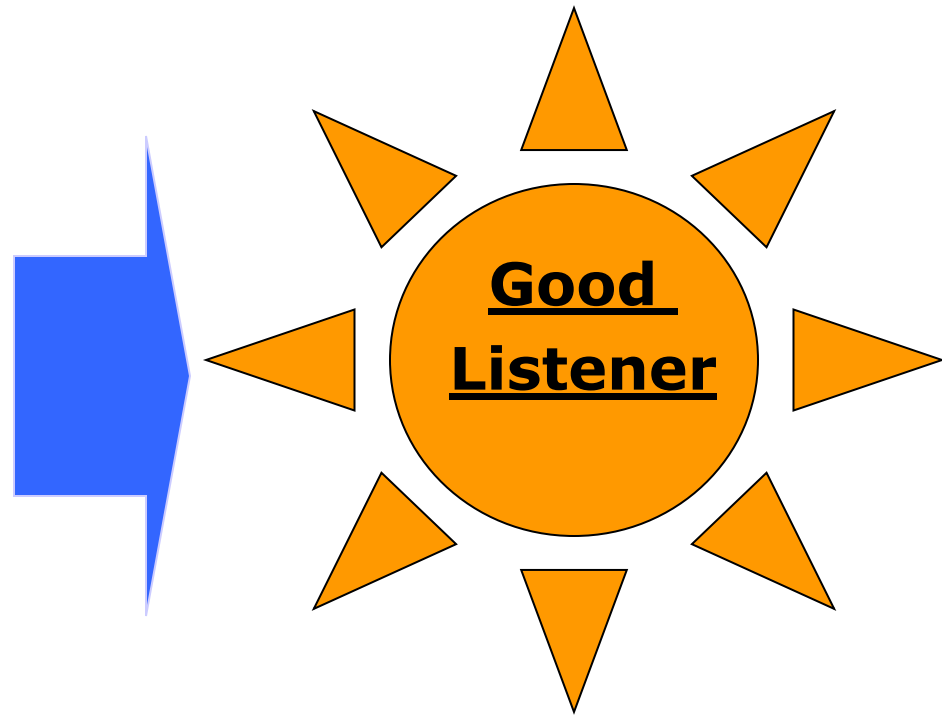
- Brief eye contact
- Eyes wide open
- Smiling
- Nodding affirmatively
- Expressive body gestures
- Open body stance
- Listening actively
- Remaining silent as customer speaks
- Gesturing with open hand
- Clean, organize work area

## Negative

- Yawning
- Frowning or sneering
- Attending to matters other than the customer
- Leaning away from customers as he/she speaks
- Subdued or Minimal hand gestures
- Staring blankly or coolly at customers
- Interrupting
- Pointing finger or object at customer
- Disorganized, cluttered work space

# Characteristics of a Good Listener

1. Empathy
2. Understanding
3. Patience
4. Attentiveness
5. Objectivity



# Strategies for Improved Listening

- Stop talking!
- Prepare yourself
- Show you care (empathy)
- Listen actively
- Show willingness to listen
- Send positive nonverbal cues
- Don't argue
- Ask questions

# Strategies for Improved Listening


Avoid jargon, acronyms and legal terms

- Call forms by the title printed at the top, not the form number
- Say the full name of an acronym
- Do not refer to an automated system's name or screen numbers
- Speak plain and simple when explaining legal actions

# **Dealing Assertively with Customers**

- **Look customers in the eyes as you speak**
- **Grasp hand firmly without crushing**
- **Think, plan, speak a specific question**
- **Stop, gather thoughts, speak**
- **Apologize if you make a mistake**
- **Increase volume, sound firm and convincing**
- **Take responsibility, resolve the problem**

# Customer Focused Behavior



## Customer focused behavior

- Act promptly
- Guide rather than direct
- Don't rush the client
- Offer assistance
- Don't keep the client waiting
- Avoid unprofessional actions

# Strategies for Improved Listening

- Telephone etiquette can make or break the caller's perception of your service
- 86% of the message is from your tone of voice
- 14% is grasped by the actual words

# Telephone Tips

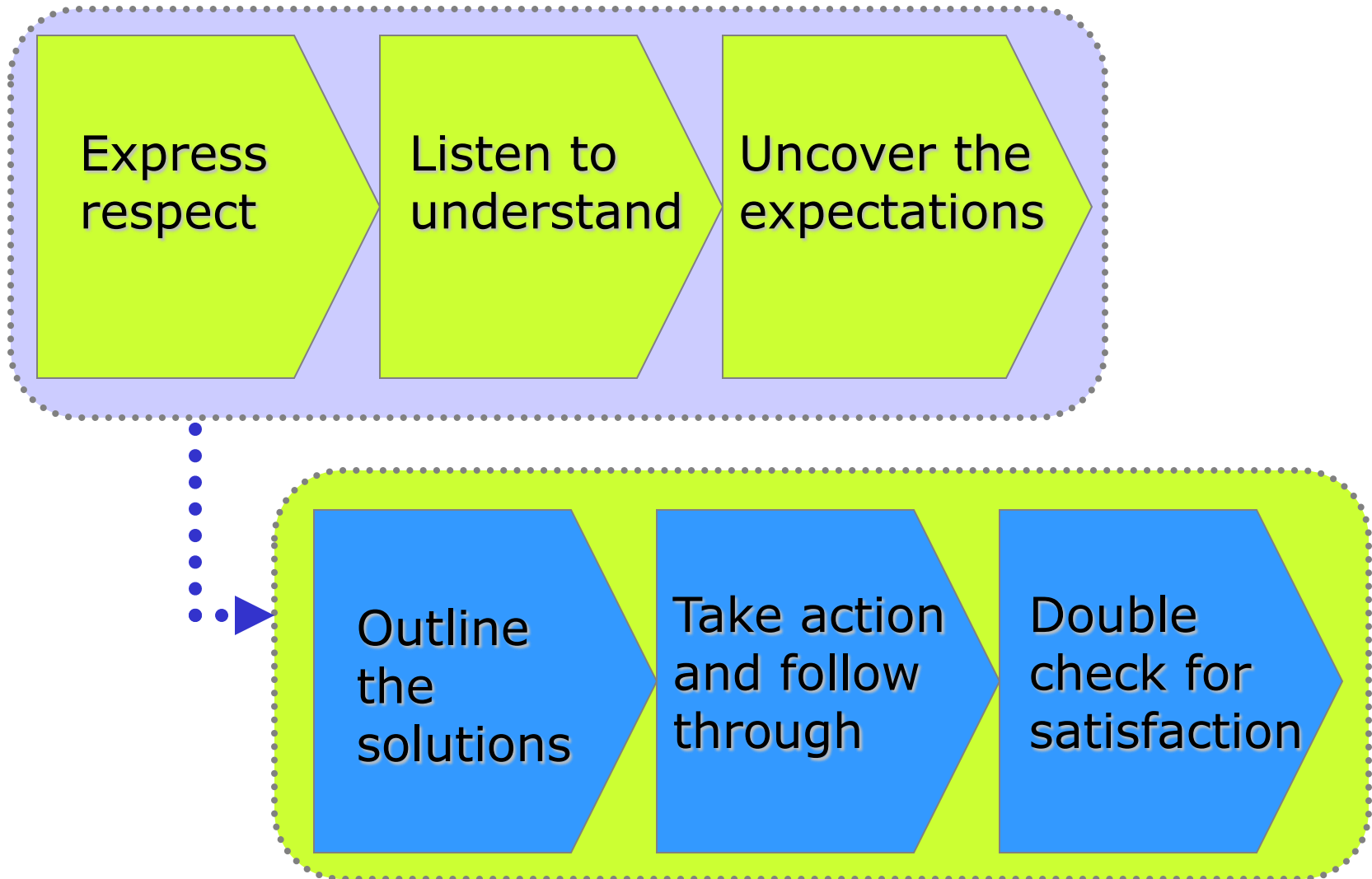
- Speak clearly at moderate speed
- Engage in active listening-provide verbal feedback
- Use correct grammar and vocabulary
- Spend extra time with limited-English speaking customers
- Stay focused – be aware that it is easier for you to become distracted
- It's easier for callers to be hostile

# **Resolving Service Breakdown**

# Service Breakdown

Service breakdowns occur whenever services fail to meet the client's expectations

# Service Recovery Strategy



# Service Recovery Strategy



Express  
respect

"What you  
are telling me  
is important"

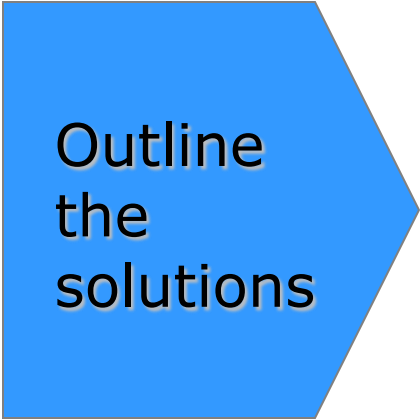
Listen to  
understand

Listen carefully;  
empathize with  
the customer; and  
do not make  
excuses or  
interruption:  
"Please tell me  
what happened"

Uncover the  
expectations


"Will you please  
tell me what you  
feel needs to be  
done?"

# Service Recovery Strategy




Outline  
the  
solutions

"I will take  
this action" or  
"You have  
several  
choices"



Take action  
and follow  
through

"Your refund has  
been requested. I  
will personally  
check with  
accounting to  
ensure your check  
goes out Friday"



Double  
check for  
satisfaction

"I am following  
up to make  
sure your  
check arrived"

# How to Deliver Bad News

Sometimes you have to say NO, but if you do it right, you can still get a “thank you” for your service

Explain why it can't be done

Don't quote policy

Don't be patronizing

Offer alternatives when you can

Avoid making excuses

Eliminate negative phrases

Don't mention other/similar complaints

# Roadblock to Service Recovery

- Not listening
- Lack of respect
- Inadequate materials or supporting equipment
- Poor or inadequate communication
- Lack of training
- Work conflict

# Dealing with Difficult People

- Don't take it personally
- Remain calm, listen carefully
- Focus on the problem, not the person
- Reward yourself for turning a difficult customer into a happy one
- When all else fails, ask for help

# Benefits of Quality Customer Service

Quality customer service is like “preventive medicine”

- Decrease in customer calls
- May decrease number of walk-in customers
- Decrease in customer complaints
- Increase in productivity (thanks to fewer calls and walk-ins)
- Increased customer satisfaction
- Improved reputation for AOC
- Reduced worker burnout

# Summary